

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1

NEW YORK TIMES
9 March 1984

SENATE UNIT BARS NEW FUNDS TO AID NICARAGUA REBELS

SETBACK TO REAGAN SEEN

Request for \$21 Million More
Was Added at Last Minute
to a Domestic Measure

By PHILIP TAUBMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 8 — A key Senate committee today rejected a proposal by President Reagan that would have nearly doubled aid this year to the Nicaraguan insurgents.

The Republican-controlled panel, the Senate Appropriations Committee, said it had been inadequately consulted about the increase.

In what was viewed as a setback for the Administration, the committee voted 15 to 14 against providing \$21 million in additional funds for the Nicaraguan rebel forces, which have been financed through the Central Intelligence Agency. Earlier this year Congress approved \$24 million.

Added to Home-Energy Aid Bill

The President's request was presented in the form of an amendment to a bill providing \$200 million in additional financing for a home-energy program for low-income citizens.

Two Republicans — Senator Mark O. Hatfield of Oregon, the panel's chairman, and Senator Pete V. Domenici of New Mexico — criticized the Administration for presenting the amendment as a last-minute, emergency request that would have cut short full consideration.

Mr. Hatfield, who voted against the amendment, called the procedure "a very poor job of management." Mr. Domenici, who voted in favor, said the Administration "handled this as poorly as anything I have seen in 11 years." He said that, if future Central American aid requests were handled in a similar way, they "will be doomed."

Administration Feared Debate

Senator Hatfield said that he had not been notified about the C.I.A. financing amendment until Wednesday afternoon. Administration officials, acknowledging that the issue had not been handled smoothly, said the request was rushed to the committee because of fear that normal consideration might drag on for months.

The committee did not consider a related request to provide \$93 million in emergency military aid to El Salvador.

Larry Speakes, the White House spokesman, said that Mr. Reagan, fearful of "a deteriorating situation in Central America," was unwilling to wait for a longer-term aid package before sending additional military assistance to El Salvador. Administration officials asserted that the Salvadoran military needed a quick infusion of aid because of shortages of arms and ammunition.

They said that, without the aid, the Salvadoran Government would be unable to provide security for presidential elections later this month.

The Senate majority whip, Ted Stevens, Republican of Alaska, gave a similar rationale to the committee for increased aid to the Nicaraguan rebels. Senator Stevens, who offered the amendment to the home-energy assistance bill, said the present aid pipeline to the rebels runs out by late spring.

The committee vote, which may be reconsidered in floor debate later this month, seemed to be a reflection of irritation with the tactics used by the White House rather than substantive opposition.

After a peppery debate and procedural maneuvering, a majority of the committee agreed that linking the last-minute request to the domestic bill would delay, if not imperil, assistance to low-income citizens.

Senator Warren H. Rudman, a New Hampshire Republican who supports the Administration's policy in Central America, voted against the amendment because he said it would complicate consideration of the domestic measure and delay payments to "cold people in my state."

The committee postponed until next week consideration of a bill that would add provide \$150 million in food aid to African nations. That bill may now serve as the vehicle for both the additional financing for the Nicaraguan rebels and the additional aid to the Salvadoran military.

Mr. Stevens said the African bill might collapse if more than one Central American amendment were added. Echoing White House officials, he said the African bill and the domestic energy aid program were the only two measures already approved by the House that could be enacted swiftly enough to provide the needed Central American aid before June.

The issue of the Nicaraguan rebels spilled over into the Senate Intelligence Committee, where Secretary of State George P. Shultz and William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, also asked for additional financing.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the New York Democrat who is committee vice chairman, later said that Mr. Shultz had apologized for the fact the committee was not consulted before the request was submitted to the Appropriations Committee. Mr. Moynihan quoted Mr. Shultz as having said that the failure to consult was "not only wrong as procedure but self-defeating."

Mr. Moynihan said his committee was prepared to consider additional financing requests for the Nicaraguan rebels, but he added that such additional money was not urgently needed.